



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

To: Mayor David B. Cohen
Fr: Charles Eisenberg, Chair, Economic Development Commission
Re: EDC Annual Report
Dt: February 26, 2004

In compliance with City Ordinance Article 5, Section 22-75 (g) (10), the Economic Development Commission is submitting its annual report of activities and recommendations.

The annual report describes the projects and activities undertaken in 2003 and identifies goals for 2004. A complete list of Commission members is also included.

Please transmit the attached report to the Board of Aldermen.



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ANNUAL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN

I. Background

The Economic Development Commission (EDC) was established under General Laws chapter 40, section 8A to promote and develop business and industry within the City of Newton. The Commission was charged with strengthening the local economy leading to new job opportunities for residents and expansion of the City's tax base. City Ordinance Article 5, Section 22-75 lays out the governing provisions as summarized below:

1. The Commission shall consist of 15 members appointed by the Mayor.
2. The Commission has the power and duty to:
 - study, investigate, and appraise economic conditions and trends;
 - promote, assist, and encourage the preservation, development and location of new and existing Newton industry, business and commerce;
 - investigate and assist in the establishment of commercial projects and identify appropriate commercial areas and zones for such establishment;
 - prepare and distribute informational publications;
 - cooperate with civic agencies/commissions/associations, state/federal agencies, municipal departments and officials, and business associations and organizations; and
 - advise and make recommendations to appropriate officials, agencies, boards, departments, and commissions of the City.

This report is prepared and submitted to the Board of Aldermen in compliance with City Ordinance Article 5, Section 22-75 (g) (10).

II. Commission Membership

Mayor David Cohen appointed and the Board of Aldermen approved three new members to the Economic Development Commission: Steven Konowitz, Philip Plottel, and Benjamin Arnhold-Weisbuch. Allen Weltz resigned due to his move to Virginia.

III. 2003 Highlights

This past year, the Economic Development Commission participated in a variety of activities and undertook tasks in alignment with its charge. The following are major



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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

projects in EDC's pipeline and summary of accomplishments in the past year; more detailed information is available through the attached meeting minutes.

Comprehensive Planning – EDC is coordinating with the Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC) to draft the City's economic development strategy. The process is synchronized through the participation of EDC members on CPAC. Other EDC members also attended CPAC meetings when topics bore relevance to economic development, such as promoting housing development in village centers.

- EDC, through Jerry Adams, is spearheading the effort to prepare the economic development strategy. A preliminary draft outline was prepared in 2002. In 2003, additional background data were gathered, including that of neighboring communities for comparative purpose. Ideas and approaches stemming from the collected information were further explored. EDC reviewed its work periodically with Phil Herr, Chairman of CPAC, to ensure consistency with other CPAC components. In doing so, EDC tracked the work progress of the four CPAC components and assimilated pertinent information to the strategy. EDC worked with CPAC in other capacities, such as providing feedback on the parameters of the commercial build-out analysis. As currently drafted, the strategy considers alternative growth scenarios; the final version will recommend a preferred scenario based on past, present and future economic climate, socioeconomic data, and core values as identified in the Framework Plan and other public documents. Although the work is undertaken by EDC, the strategy will be incorporated as an element of the comprehensive plan.
- *In 2004, EDC will complete the economic development strategy.*

Newton Centre Triangle – EDC has identified the Newton Centre Triangle as an underutilized area and one that merited further investigation. Bruce Gold chairs the subcommittee to explore opportunities that further promote economic vitality and enhance the overall quality of life for all Newton residents. In doing so, the subcommittee:

- Reviewed programs and services offered by other planning institutions as potential technical and financial resource. Subsequently, an application for technical assistance was submitted to the Smart Growth Leadership Institute. Although not selected, its application was one of ten semi-finalists from a pool of over 100 applications.
- Identified the first essential action step; to meet with opinion leaders for their input. Opinion leaders, representing a broad spectrum of interest groups, were identified. Effort is currently underway to schedule these meetings. The first meeting will be with members of the Board of Aldermen; the initial meeting was delayed until after the November election and all Committee Chairs were identified.
- *In 2004 the EDC, through its subcommittee, will have concluded its meetings with opinion leaders. The next step is contingent on the outcome of these meetings.*



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Development Activities – The EDC reviewed the proposal for large commercial development projects, assessed their economic impact and delivered its comments to the Land Use Committee at its public hearing.

- Star Market – EDC reviewed the demolition and construction plans for the Star Market on Route 9. The members discussed the impact of the project and concluded that the increase in tax revenue and employment opportunities was of merit. EDC elected to deliver and submit a statement to the Land Use Committee at the public hearing in favor of the project.
- 300 Needham Street – EDC reviewed materials and heard presentation by the developer on their proposal for 300 Needham Street. After deliberating on the economic, land use and traffic impacts of the project, EDC voted to deliver and submit a statement to the Land Use Committee at the public hearing in favor of the project.
- Chestnut Hill Development – EDC reviewed the Environmental Notification Form filed by New England Development for a mix use project on Route 9. EDC determined that the project was too preliminary and opted to withhold comments until a more finalized plan is developed. EDC will continue to monitor the project's progress.
- Kessler Woods - EDC attended public meetings to review the proposed development for that site; it deemed that the proposed development was appropriate for that site.
- *In 2004 the EDC will continue to track commercial development projects, review their economic feasibility, and comment on their impacts to the City.*

Other – In addition to the above, the EDC undertook a broad range of activities including the following:

- Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance and Hotel Linkage Fee – The Zoning and Planning Committee assigned EDC to review the impact of increasing hotel linkage fee from 10 percent to 15 percent and of its effect on future hotel development. EDC prepared a pro forma whose analysis determined that the increase would discourage any new hotel development in the City.
- Mayor's Village Business meetings. EDC members attended the Mayor's Village Business Breakfast meetings to hear local businesses' concerns.
- EDC maintained links with the Chamber of Commerce and other economic development organizations.
- Following the joint meeting with the Newton Telecommunications Advisory Board in December 2002, the respective Chairs met with Mayor Cohen to discuss the IT Director vacancy and the importance of the position to the City's economic development and telecommunications planning needs.
- *In 2004, EDC will continue to undertake activities that relate to its charge.*